1608/2850

*The aged Christian coming to his Grave in Season.*

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A

# SERMON,

OCCASIONED

BY THE DEATH

OF

## Mr. JOHN ELDRIDGE,

WHO

DEPARTED THIS LIFE,

APRIL 27, 1773,

IN THE

EIGHTIETH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

PREACHED AT

YARMOUTH, MAY 2, 1773.

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BY THOMAS HOWE.

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Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Family.

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*NORWICH:*

Printed and ſold by RICHARD BEATNIFFE.
Sold alſo by WM. EATON in YARMOUTH.

(PRICE SIX-PENCE.)

BRITISH MUSEUM
30 JUL 67

1608/2850.

# INTRODUCTION.

Addressed to the Audience

AS it has pleased the Sovereign Lord of Life, to remove from our world an honourable and very useful member of this Society, you will naturally expect some public notice to be taken of that event. It would indeed be criminal to refuse the tribute due to such a character, or to neglect the improvement that may be made of such a death. Yet I confess myself not a little at a loss, in what manner to address you upon the important subject. The first impression the mind naturally receives from such a death, is, a painful sense of the loss which, not only his friends, and this Society, but the common cause of christians sustains by his removal.

But this thought ſcarcely poſſeſſes the mind, when a ſecond immediately ſucceeds, and brings into view the diſtinguiſhed honour and felicity of the departed ſpirit. One awakens ſorrow; the other calls for joy. It is ſcarcely poſſible, not to weep for ourſelves--- It would be indecent, not to rejoice with him. Perhaps, if both are united, it may beſt promote the deſigns of Providence with reſpect to us.

It was with this view that I fixed my thoughts for the ſubject of the preſent diſcourſe, upon that paſſage of the inſpired volume which you will find.

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JOB v. 26.

*Thou ſhalt come to thy grave in full age, like as a ſhock of corn cometh in, in ~~full~~ his ſeaſon.*

THESE words are at the cloſe of an excellent ſpeech of Eliphas, one of the friends of Job, in which he had given an amiable view of the wiſdom and goodneſs of GOD towards his ſervants under their afflictions. They are happy even when corrected. For though he maketh ſore, he alſo bindeth up: and if at any time he woundeth, his hand alſo maketh whole. He delivers from every diſtreſs, or ſupports them under it; till all the purpoſes of his wiſdom and love concerning them in the preſent world are anſwered, and then, as a ſhock of corn ripe, and in its proper ſeaſon, he gathers them to himſelf by death.

Coming to the grave in full age, may, no doubt, be applied to an advanced period of life. And this, for many important reaſons,

God may ſee good to indulge ſome of his ſervants with. But it cannot be conſidered as the ſubject of a general promiſe. It ſeems more natural therefore to underſtand this phraſe, *full age*, of that maturity of character by which the ſervants of God are prepared for death, and ripe for the world of glory.

This thought is at leaſt evidently pointed out, by the metophor of a ſhock of corn coming in, in its ſeaſon. Every ſoul received to the world of bliſs is, in ſome meaſure, prepared for it. And when the divine wiſdom continues any of his ſervants to more advanced years it is for this end, to mature their graces, and thereby advance their glory in the world above.

And this indeed is not unfrequently the ſubject of his promiſes. As Pſal. xcii. 13, 14, 15. Thoſe who are planted in the houſe of the Lord, ſhall flouriſh in the courts of our God. They ſhall bring forth fruit in old age: they ſhall be fat and flouriſhing: to ſhew that the Lord is upright----and that there is no unrighteouſneſs in him.

Now when God has thus prepared the veſſels of mercy for the heavenly ſtate, he, as wiſdom

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wiſdom directs, takes the moſt proper ſeaſon to remove them. Theſe therefore are the principal thoughts I ſhall dwell upon in the preſent diſcourſe. I ſhall

I. Illuſtrate the metaphor in our text, which gives us ſuch an agreeable view of death, with reſpect to thoſe whom divine grace has prepared for heaven. And then

II. Show you what aſſurance we have from the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, that he *will* gather them in, or call them to the grave, in their proper ſeaſon.

Thoughts like theſe will naturally apply themſelves to the preſent occaſion: And, if we are not exceedingly wanting to ourſelves, may be greatly uſeful to us all.

I. I will endeavour to illuſtrate the metaphor in our text, which gives us ſuch an agreeable view of death, with reſpect to thoſe whom divine grace has prepared for heaven.

Thou ſhalt come to thy grave in full age, like as a ſhock of corn cometh in, in its ſeaſon. Death and the grave are indeed words of awful import; and we naturally ſhudder at the very thought. But here the ideas are clothed in language adapted rather to baniſh

terror, and inſpire the mind with ſerenity and joy.

The metaphor implies, in the firſt place, the particular care and attention of the divine providence with reference to the death of his ſervants. And this is a thought of rich conſolation to a dying chriſtian. It is by the order, and at the call of his heavenly father that he dies, whoſe gracious hand leads him to the grave with paternal tenderneſs. It is true in ſome reſpects, as Solomon obſerves, as dieth the fool, or wicked man, ſo dieth the wiſe man, or the moſt improved chriſtian. With reſpect to the outward appearances of things, and the manner in which death makes his approach, and executes his office; or the effects of his awful ſtroke upon the body, there is no diſtinction in favour of one character more than another. One as well as the other muſt die, and both by the appointment of God, the ſovereign of life and death. But in other reſpects there is an important difference. The man who lived without God, and through the courſe of life, ſaid to the Almighty depart from me, is at length overtaken by the hand of juſtice, and cut down in righteous diſpleaſure. On the

contrary,

contrary, the genuine chriſtian, who has walked humbly with his God, is, in his dying moments, the peculiar object of his care. Not cut down in anger---not caſt into the grave to periſh--but gently led to the bed of reſt, by the meſſengers of mercy, who even in his death fulfil the purpoſes of his father's love. As the Huſbandman after all the toils and expectations of various ſeaſons, will be particularly aſſiduous that his labours and his hopes are not loſt for want of care in the harveſt; ſo the ever bleſſed God, who condeſcends to own himſelf under that character of the huſbandman, and who has taken ſuch care of his ſervants through all the various ſcenes of life, and laid out ſo much upon them to prepare them for himſelf, will beſtow the moſt favourable and gracious attention upon them in the hour of death, and give his Angels charge concerning them.

Secondly, This language alſo implies the great account that God makes of his ſervants, whom he has thus finiſhed and prepared for heaven.

As the harveſt is the huſbandman's treaſure, the reward of his labours and his hopes---ſo, precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death

of

of his ſaints. In them he ſees with complacency the effects of his grace, the reward of the ſufferings and obedience of his ſon, and he condeſcends to call them his portion and his jewels. By death he gathers them to himſelf, and rejoices over them as what he has recovered from an apoſtate world. He ſees indeed with approbation and delight the firſt principles of that character which is formed by his ſacred word, though yet attended with various imperfections. But when he beholds them laden with the fruits of righteouſneſs----ſees them triumph over the laſt enemy by faith in Jeſus----dropping every infirmity with the body, and every grace ſhine brighter as the light of heaven beams upon them, then he rejoices over them with peculiar joy. So the huſbandman is pleaſed to obſerve the ſpringing blade, the budding ear, the ſwelling grain, but eſpecially delighted when he gathers in the ripened fruit. And

Thirdly, The analogy leads us to obſerve farther, that good men are by death brought into a ſtate of ſecurity and happineſs. In this ſenſe John Baptiſt uſes the ſame metaphor

phor as that in the text, when he ſays of Chriſt, He ſhall gather the wheat into his garner and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. The former undoubtedly intends that ſtate of perfection and ſecurity in which he places his faithful ſervants after death. The mortal part is indeed, for the preſent, conſigned to the grave, but the ſoul returns to God. Is received to the manſions of its father's houſe---When abſent from the body, is preſent with the Lord, ſecure for ever, and compleatly happy. And not only ſo, but

Fourthly, We are hereby taught to conſider even the grave as a faithful repoſitory for their ſleeping duſt.

They come to the grave, not to be thrown aſide, neglected, or to periſh there. It is a ſtore-houſe rather, in which their duſt is treaſured up for a while, and from whence, in its proper ſeaſon, it ſhall be removed to the heavenly world. We commit it to the ground in ſure and certain hope of a reſurrection to eternal life. The bodies as well as the ſouls of believers are ſaid to be ſanctified, and to be the members of Chriſt; and he will ſuffer none of them to be loſt. They that

ſleep

ſleep in Jeſus ſhall riſe again---They ſhall hear the voice of the ſon of God and live---He ſhall reclaim them from the grave, and from the duſt that was lodged there to a pure, a glorious and immortal body. Say now, chriſtians, is there any thing dreadful and alarming in ſuch a view of death? Does it not rather make its approach to the ſervants of God in a pleaſing form? He leads them to the grave with tenderneſs and care---Gathers their ſouls to himſelf as a treaſure he greatly values---Conducts them to a ſtate of perfect ſecurity and happineſs---And will finally raiſe their bodies too. I proceed now, as I propoſed, to obſerve,

II. That the wiſdom and goodneſs of God aſſure us, that he will thus gather his ſervants in, or call them to the grave, in their proper ſeaſon.

As the full ripened corn, bending under its own weight, the brittle, withered ſtalk ſcarcely able to bear its burden, reminds the huſbandman, that it is in full age, and ought to be gathered in; ſo when the chriſtian has ſtood the whole round of mortal life, and is maturely ripe for heaven, it is fit he ſhould be removed.

But, that we may more fully illuſtrate this head, let the following thoughts be attended to.

1ſt. That when God is pleaſed to continue his ſervants to an advanced age, it is for ſome end that is worthy of himſelf, and merciful to them.

We indeed may be at a loſs to account for it when they are continued, as we think, beyond their capacity either of uſefulneſs or enjoyment. We imagine their full age is come before the grave is ready for them, and are apt to ſay, fooliſhly enough, it would be well if God would pleaſe to take them to himſelf. But herein God will anſwer for himſelf. He has trained up millions of ſouls for heaven and glory, and ſhall not he know when to remove them from the ſtate of trial? They may ſtand in need of ſome particular improvement which may be beſt promoted by their longer continuance, when we think they have continued too long already; and when, perhaps, through ſome natural weakneſs, they may not themſelves perceive that improvement.

Thus the unſkilful obſerver may ſometimes imagine, from the rankneſs of the ſtalk, or the

the largeneſs of the ear, that it is time the grain was cut down; and may, perhaps, be ready to charge the more obſervant huſbandman with folly and neglect, when, it is his better knowledge and experience that determine him to wait a more proper ſeaſon.

Young chriſtians, when they firſt enter the paths of wiſdom, promiſe to themſelves to make ſwift advances in the chriſtian courſe; and ſeem to others, as though they would be fit for death and heaven before many of much longer ſtanding, but, perhaps, their zeal and paſſion in ſome appearances of religion, have, like the rank blade, prejudiced the improvement of their minds in the more eſſential graces of the chriſtian character. It may require a long courſe of diſcipline, to form them to that maturity God deſigns them for, or to anſwer all thoſe uſeful ends he has in view to ſerve, either by their labours, their example or their ſufferings. And

2dly. As it is proper they ſhould ſtand till they have their full maturity, ſo we may obſerve a peculiar propriety in their being removed from our world, when they are thus advanced in years and prepared for heaven.

Theſe

Theſe bodies were not made to be immortal in their preſent ſtate and form. Beyond three-ſcore years and ten, the Pſalmiſt obſerves, all is labour and ſorrow. The body is then generally fit for the grave, and if the ſoul is prepared for heaven, it is right it ſhould be tranſlated thither. He has now ſeen the whole round of earthly things---has ſeen one generation riſe, paſs away, and give place to another; and wonders that before this, ſome buſy mortal, with all the vivacity of youth, or the importance of more vigorous years, has not demanded his room, and puſhed him off the ſtage of life. He once took his part among the ſons of buſineſs---has paſſed through all the various and dangerous ſcenes of youthful amuſement, and the cares of riper years, and has now got on this ſide of all, and can do little more than ſay This, or that has been. His vigour and his ſtrength now almoſt exhauſted--his nerves relaxed, and with difficulty extending his trembling hands, or ſupporting his tottering frame--till at laſt, borne down with its own weight, it bows towards the earth, and aſks for reſt in the grave. And when got thus far, he is as little capable

pable of the pleaſure, as of the buſineſs of life. He has enough to do to ſupport the frequent infirmities and weakneſs of declining nature, and being in his own apprehenſion of little conſequence in the world, he will often ſay, I could willingly drop this frail body; and, if my heavenly father pleaſes, could wiſh that the breaches which age and pain have made in this earthly tabernacle might grow wider, and let the building fall to the ground.

There is indeed an intimate relation between the ſoul and body which makes the thoughts of ſeparation painful. But when one is worn out, and the other fit for heaven, it is proper the relation ſhould be diſſolved. We often complain of the body, in its beſt ſtate, as an hindrance to the ſoul; but are, perhaps, therein miſtaken. It is a ſuitable habitation for the mind in its preſent ſtate of diſcipline and trial. But as the ſoul enlarges in its views, and improves in character to a nearer reſemblance of the heavenly world, the body becomes leſs capable of bearing its pure and active emotion, or of ſerving the ſoul therein. They have a tendency to different and contrary ways. The body wears

away,

away, becomes leſs ſenſible to impreſſion--- the ſoul on the contrary grows more active, more ſpiritual and heavenly, till--one is ready for the grave, the other ready for the world of glory, and then it is proper they ſhould be ſeparated--that the mind ſhould be ſet at liberty from its confinement, where it could no longer exerciſe its enlarged and improved powers.

For you may often obſerve, that the intellectual capacities ſeem to decline with the body towards the cloſe of life. Hence ſometimes the moſt advanced chriſtians complain of the weakneſs of their graces, and entertain many painful fears, becauſe their apprehenſion of divine things is leſs quick, their affections leſs lively, and their ſpirits leſs active than they once were. And on this account ſome have too haſtily and too confidently concluded, that the ſoul itſelf gradually ſinks into a ſtate of inſenſibility and inaction together with the body, and ſleeps till the reſurrection day. But why ſhould we draw a concluſion ſo uncomfortable in itſelf, ſo contrary to the general ſenſe of mankind, and to the moſt obvious ſenſe of divine revela-

tion, from an effect ſo eaſy to be accounted for without it? For it is obvious enough, that when the animal ſyſtem is falling into decay, and the organs of ſenſe receive but few and faint impreſſions, that the ſoul muſt be thereby greatly limited in its perceptions and operations too. When therefore the body is no longer uſeful to the ſoul, but confines and hinders it, it is ſeaſonable the ſeparation ſhould take place. We may add alſo, the wiſdom of God will order the removal of his ſervants when their work is done. We none of us live for ourſelves alone. The God who gave us being ſerves his own wiſe and holy purpoſes by us all. But the chriſtian deſigns the glory of God as the end of life. The grace of God forms him for a uſeful life, and inclines him to it. And when he has ſerved his generation according to the will of God, he falls aſleep and reſts in Jeſus Not only is received to reſt, but receives alſo the reward of grace. Thus the Apoſtle; I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs.

Nor

Nor can it be ſuppoſed that a wiſe and gracious God ſhould leave his ſervants, after their maturity for heaven, to be expoſed, without neceſſity, to the injuries and dangers of the preſent world.

The ripened grain is the more liable to injury from inclemency of weather: and a mind rich in the graces of the chriſtian character, though moſt chearfully reſigned to the diſpenſations of providence, has yet a diſpoſition leſs ~~ſituated~~ unfitted to the cuſtoms and manners of the world; liable to be exceedingly torn and wounded by the boiſterous and rude aſſaults of worldly and wicked men; and expoſed every hour to numberleſs temptations to accommodate himſelf and his manners to the world in which he lives. Temptations the more painful and alarming to him, the more his character is improved and refined for a better ſtate. And who that knows what it coſts to form a ſoul for heaven, will not ſee and acknowledge, both the wiſdom and the goodneſs of God, in ſecuring his ſervants from the future dangers and ſorrows of a ſinful world, when they have honourably filled

their ſtation, and are well prepared to move in a higher ſphere. And I add,

3dly, Our text contains a promiſe in the name of God, that he *will* remove his ſervants from their preſent ſorrows in the moſt proper ſeaſon.

It has been already obſerved, that though the words as addreſſed to Job might be underſtood as a promiſe of long life, yet it is ſafer, in the general application to good men, to conſider them as an aſſurance, that they ſhall come to their grave in the moſt convenient and ſuitable time, whether ſooner or later.

There is no doubt a vaſt variety as to improvement in the character of thoſe who yet die in the Lord. There is no doubt (at leaſt with me there is none) that infants who are taken out of the world before they are capable of knowing moral good and evil, are, through the mediation of Chriſt, received to a ſtate of pure and perfect happineſs. Yet there muſt be a vaſt difference at the time of their death between the capacity and character of ſuch infant minds, and that of an advanced

vanced chriſtian, who has long been growing towards perfection under the diſcipline of the word and ordinances of the goſpel.

We cannot pretend to ſay, what it is, that is wanting in ſome chriſtians worn out with years, and rich in grace, who have long waited for their diſmiſſion, and yet are detained on earth. Or what it is that ſhould hinder other chriſtians, taken away in the vigour of life, from making farther advances in knowledge and holineſs, and being more uſeful if continued longer. We only know that God is infinitely wiſe and good and faithful to his word; and that, if he continues his ſervants long on earth, it is to improve their minds by diſcipline, and glorify himſelf by their preſent ſphere of ſervice: or if he removes them ſooner, it is becauſe he has finiſhed what he deſigned for them on earth. He knows the ſtate of every mind, their circumſtances, their capacities, their dangers, and therefore when to his all comprehending mind it appears, that they are as improved as the preſent ſtate will admit for them, he graciouſly leads them to the grave in their full age, and in the proper ſeaſon.

And now, ſirs, give me leave to aſk, what reflections are riſing in your minds upon the view we have taken of this pleaſing ſubject? There is one reflection which I think none can well avoid, and which, though painful, muſt not be ſuppreſſed. It is this---what a contraſt there is between the foregoing character and ſtate, and that of thoſe who die in their impenitence und unbelief, at enmity with God, and ſtrangers to the work and bleſſedneſs of heaven?

I mean this as an alarm to the living, who who are conſcious to themſelves, that this is their preſent character. And if there are any ſuch preſent, I would wiſh to awaken them by the terrors of the Lord. Believe it, ſirs, there are (for God has ſaid it) there are veſſels of wrath who have fitted themſelves for deſtruction. Or in language more agreeable to the metaphor in our text, he has told you, that he eſteems the wicked as tares, as ſtubble, as chaff, doomed to be burnt in unquenchable fire. And need I add any thing to this? Can it fail to rouſe the ſlumbering ſinner who nods upon the brink of ruin? Harken then, ye grey-headed ſinners, who

are

are full of years, and, (O! alarming thought) have almoſt filled up the meaſure of your iniquities!---Think, through what a courſe of years you have been preparing for deſtruction---Think, how nearly you are ripe for ruin---Ponder upon the ſtriking contraſt between your caſe, and that of the aged chriſtian, whoſe cultivated mind, and chearful hopes, anticipate the joys of heaven--Think (with a broken heart) of the patience of your God, of the love of Jeſus, of the means of grace you have abuſed. And at leaſt admit this thought, to juſtify the character and government of your injured Lord, that if you finally perſiſt in your oppoſition to his truth and goodneſs, there remains nothing for him to do with you worthy of himſelf, but to make you monuments of his juſt diſpleaſure. But the awful ſtroke is yet ſuſpended---ſtill there is hope. And though your guilt is great----though much of your time is gone, and a vaſt change muſt be made upon you, yet there is both mercy to pardon, and grace to help you. That mercy is proclaimed in the goſpel for the

ſalvation of the chief of ſinners, that grace can renew the moſt degenerate minds. From hence alone the moſt improved mind derives all its conſolation, all its ſupport in death; and you too, by an humble ſubmiſſion to the righteouſneſs and government of God revealed in the goſpel of his ſon, may injoy the ſame lively hopes, even in your dying moments.

It is indeed an aſtoniſhing thing, and very honourable to the great Redeemer and the grace of God in him, that any of the guilty ſons of men ſhould be able to think of death with rational complacency, and well founded joy. Death in itſelf appears as an enemy--- The thoughts of a future ſtate is naturally awful---The unavoidable preſages of a judgment-day, and the conſciouſneſs of guilt, arm this enemy with a thouſand terrors. But the free redemption there is in Chriſt, the honours done to the divine character and government by his atonement, the ſure promiſes of eternal life, and that ſpirit of adoption which inſpires the ſoul with confidence in the love of God, theſe ſupport the mind of a dying chriſtian,

tian, raiſe him ſuperior to the fears of death, and delightfully enlarge his views of happineſs beyond the grave.

And is there not now ſomething great and excellent in ſuch a character? Something that is lovely, and that greatly recommends the goſpel?----Something that has dignity and worth, and that raiſes the ſoul of man to the true glory of his nature? How different that poverty, that meanneſs, that littleneſs of ſoul, that it is wholly devoted to earthly things, and ſeeks its portion here? The chriſtian has a larger ſoul, has more exalted views and hopes, and by his converſe with God and heavenly things, has ſomething divine impreſſed upon him.

There is that in his character which proclaims itſelf the offspring of God----Something worthy of God to produce, and that is certainly from above. Thus the Apoſtle, when ſpeaking of his aſſured and joyful hope of heaven, ſays, now he that hath wrought us for the ſelf-ſame thing, is God, who alſo hath given unto us, the earneſt of the ſpirit.

I doubt

I doubt not you are all beforehand with me, ſaying to yourſelves, ſuch was the character of that venerable and amiable chriſtian who has lately left us. Heaven has received few in theſe later ages more ready to enter upon its exalted ſervices and joys. For a long courſe of years he was aſſiduouſly learning the ſongs, cultivating the temper, and practiſing the employments of the heavenly world. His ſoul was habitually filled with heavenly objects ---- his converſation was in heaven. This was his prevailing temper. And the fruits of ſuch a character muſt be both amiable, and beneficial unto others. And ſo indeed they were in him. As his treaſure was in heaven, he had, from principle as well as natural temper, a generous ſuperiority to the world. A generoſity, which, under the influence of ſuch views as his mind was enlarged with, muſt in many inſtances expreſs itſelf beyond thoſe bounds which little minds are circumſcribed by.

Divine love expanded his heart, and put all the ſprings of his ſoul in motion in the the offices of humanity and chriſtian friendſhip.

ſhip. And in nothing did the image of God his father and the Lord Jeſus appear in him with greater luſtre than in this, his active zeal to do good to all within his reach. It was from ſuch principles as theſe that his converſation was, on every proper occaſion, ſo remarkably ſpiritual, taking every opportunity offered of introducing uſeful ſubjects of diſcourſe. The word and ordinances of God, and communion with his fellow chriſtians therein, were the joy of his heart; and he was moſt affectionately devoted to them, both as the ſtated means of promoting the kingdom of Chriſt in the world, and as a delightful anticipation of heavenly bleſſedneſs.

And while he profeſſed ſuch views as theſe, he gave bright and ſhining evidence that they were indeed the ſentiments of his heart. He carried the ſame ſpirit with him into his family and his cloſet; which were to him as the houſe of God and the gate of heaven. The pleaſure and improvement that he found in devout retirement abundantly recompenſed his diligence therein, which was indeed very uncommon. He generally roſe at four in the

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ſummer, and five in winter, to improve and refreſh his mind by the word of God and prayer. And when a little before his death it has been ſuggeſted to him, that he roſe too ſoon conſidering his infirmities, his anſwer has been, that he would not loſe the comfort he enjoyed in thoſe early hours for all the wealth in the world.

The happy effects of his devotion were as conſpicuous as his zeal therein. For while he thus improved his graces, and renewed his ſtrength, he was the more ready to every good word and work---his ſoul was at the command of Jeſus as his Lord, and ready at every call to lay out himſelf, his time, his ſtrength, his property, to ſerve the cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs; and to promote either the preſent, or eternal happineſs of his fellow creatures. Chriſtianity with him was a diſcipline that formed his manners as well as his ſentiments, and produced an honourable conduct in all the relations of life. And ſo much of the goodneſs of his heart was ſeen in all his actions, as to gain him a reputation and eſteem that is almoſt ſingular, and indeed

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ſcarcely to be expected from the moſt improved characters. Having now finiſhed his courſe and filled up his ſtation with ſo much honour, his divine maſter has thought proper to diſmiſs him from the painful confinement of the body, and advance him to a higher ſtate. We are indeed thereby deprived of an example--of a friend, who was a bleſſing to us all; yet, we cannot but approve----We cannot ſurely but be grateful, that he was continued with us ſo long. This, I ſay, demands our gratitude. For doubtleſs it was one end for which his willing and ready ſoul was detained ſo many years from that world of light and purity to which he is now arrived, that we might be indulged with ſuch a bleſſing as long as the divine wiſdom could permit. But, alas, chriſtians, how ſhall we anſwer it to our God, or indeed to ourſelves and one another, that we have ſo little improved the bleſſing! 'Tis this that makes the loſs ſo heavy to us. And in this view it becomes us to be deeply affected by it, and to humble ourſelves under the hand of God. It is juſt in God to correct us thus---to remove his

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ſervant to better ſociety, and more ſuited to him; and thereby to chaſtiſe the formality of our minds and the unprofitableneſs of our lives. Yet when he thus corrects, it is only to awaken and and reform us--to give us the louder call for diligence and zeal: That whatſoever our hands find to do for the honour of God, for the ſervice of the world, or Church, we ſhould ariſe and do it with all our might.

And in the cloſe of all, let aged chriſtians in particular, be excited by the providence and the ſubject now before us, to get ready and be willing to depart.

We blame even the young and gay, under all their peculiar temptations, for their fond attachment to the pleaſures and amuſements of time and ſenſe. We exhort them to let go theſe ſhadows, and turn their thoughts to more ſubſtantial pleaſures. We call even *them* to look beyond the preſent world, to heavenly objects more worthy their purſuit. But we call in vain---They will not be perſuaded---They plead, they muſt taſte the pleaſures of life and the ſweets of ſenſe while

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they have a relish for them; and falsely imagine religion would spoil their pleasures. We turn them to aged sinners, who must shortly leave the world, and hope they will be easily perswaded to give up that vain attachment to earthly things which have so long deceived them, and fix their thoughts on that world on the verge of which they stand. But we are generally unsuccessful still. When they are leaving the world they will not let it go. Disappointed, we fix our last hope on those who profess to have set their affections on things above, to those especially who tell us, that both their advanced years and the grace of God have taught them the vanity of earthly things, and to seek their portion amongst the saints in light.

And yet after all, these christians, these aged christians, cleave unto the dust----Too fond of life---too much afraid to die----Patience of life indeed becomes you---patience that resigns your best desires to the will of God. But those desires should be strong and active---They will be so if you converse more with things above, and get your spirits more

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fitted to the heavenly ſtate. Awake then chriſtians, and get into a waiting poſture for the coming of your Lord. You are taught to ſpeak of that event as the bleſſed object of your hope. You are taught to groan in the ardour of your deſires, for that day of compleat redemption, and in the language of thoſe deſires to ſay, Come, Lord Jeſus, Come quickly. And in this happy ſtate of mind may you, may I, have an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of our Lord. Amen!

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THE END.